

NASA: No American Sovereigns Allowed

By J.J. Johnson 05.03.01

Around the world, millions are celebrating the first paying tourist in space, Dennis Tito. Every individual space agency is sending salutations - except one: NASA. The actions and statements of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration are so shocking to the American Spirit that perhaps it's time for the White House and the American public to get involved here.

NASA has long opposed the historic trip, saying Tito lacked the training or Russian language skills to ensure the safety of the Soyuz and Alpha crews. Bullpucky. If that were the problem, the simple solution would be to train him. After all, they had no problem getting 77 year-old John Glenn trained. Get this: Tito first asked NASA - an organization for which he used to plot flight trajectories before he asked the Russians - back in 1991, when Russia was still the Soviet Union.

But, despite paying enough U.S. taxes to all but claim part ownership of the American sections, Tito cannot enter U.S. segments of the multibillion dollar complex unescorted and pledged to pay for anything he breaks even though the Russians pledged to pour the Tito cash fare back into the International Space Station (ISS). To add insult to injury, when Tito finishes his visit to the ISS, NASA will be sending Russia a bill, NASA Administrator Daniel Goldin told members of Congress on May 2. (Goldin is now a larger embarrassment to America than Monica).

The space station crew's first task is to "baby-sit Mr. Tito, and make sure nothing goes wrong, because safety is our number one priority," Goldin said. Sorry, Goldin but that computer crash happened BEFORE he got there. And as a matter of fact, every negative incident that has ever occurred on any mission happened with "highly trained astronauts" at the helm.

Rep. Nicholas Lampson (D-Texas), a member of the panel which has NASA oversight, said he is having a hard time explaining to his constituents why millionaires are taking trips to the space station when research, development and components related to the facility are being cut back for budgetary reasons. Hey Lampson, your constituents don't need you to explain it to them. They all know he paid for the trip. Our side however, didn't want his money.

A 1997 NASA study showed that about one-third of Americans are interested in taking a trip to space. That's more folks than voted for any one presidential candidate last year. And a company called Space Adventures has already taken 144 reservations for space flights it can't even deliver yet. One thing stands in the way - NASA.

Here's the message NASA is sending: Free Enterprise may work in Russia and elsewhere, but it means nothing in America. "We at NASA (an agency of the U.S. Government) don't want any American leaving the planet without our permission."

It sickens me whenever we hear about NASA begging *us* to beg Congress for more money only to be told - it's not really for us - but for them. Tito will return home with the stigma of being the first American Hero - who embarrassed America.

Suppose NASA welcomed the effort. Possibly, other billionaires would be lining up, and the ticket prices could pay for space station expansions, and even future space exploration. This could be the shot in the arm the space industry needs.

But no, get government in the way. Look outside at night and gaze at all those stars in the sky. See them? See the sky itself? Well, wherever you are, the United States now thinks it owns, controls, and has jurisdiction over all of it. And by the way, if your young American child is dreaming of going into outer space, make plans on having them change their citizenship first. It's safe enough for politicians but not for you - at any price.

The elitist arrogance of NASA may be the motivation needed for "private space travel" (I can see NASA officials already shaking in their space boots.) Who says private citizens can't do it? After all, the equipment built for space is made by private contractors, and most employees are private citizens. Just think, if you could build, say - a hotel orbiting in space, how much could you charge per night? As for amenities, since there are no laws up there, the sky's the limit (pun intended).

This will, of course, cause NASA officials to be in court someday - hoping some judge will in fact rule that the Constitution actually does give the federal government jurisdiction over all of space.

NASA's behavior over the Dennis Tito trip, if not corrected, could cure many others of any interest they currently have in space travel. As an American, Tito should be given Tito a ticker tape parade and all the honors given our first astronauts, and should for no reason – give NASA any debriefing... ..unless they pay him 20 million dollars.

Permission to reprint/republish granted, as long as you include the name of our site, the author, and our URL.
www.SierraTimes.com

All Sierra Times news reports, and all editorials are © 2001 SierraTimes.com (unless otherwise noted)

SierraTimes.com™ A Subsidiary of J.J. Johnson Enterprises, Inc.